

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MINUTES – DRAFT
January 28, 2009

Acting Chair Krueger called the Transportation Commission to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL** – Roll was called and the following recorded.

Members Present:

John Knox White
Michael Krueger
Jane Lee
Robert McFarland
Kathy Moehring
Srikant Subramaniam

Members Absent:

Eric Schatmeier (arrived at 7:55 p.m.)

Staff Present:

Obaid Khan, Supervising Civil Engineer
Barry Bergman, Transportation Coordinator

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. December 10, 2008

Staff Bergman noted that the December 10, 2008, minutes would be presented at the next meeting.

- b. November 12, 2008

Commissioner Krueger moved approval of the minutes for the November 12, 2008, meeting and minutes as presented. *Commissioner Moehring* seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0. Absent: *Commissioner Schatmeier*.

3. **AGENDA CHANGES**

There were none.

4. **COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS**

- a. **Transit Plan Subcommittee**

Commissioner Krueger noted that the Transit Plan Subcommittee met in early January, attended by *Commissioner Schatmeier*, *Staff Bergman* and himself. They discussed the scope of work for the Transit Plan based on the grant application made to CalTrans. While the City did not receive

the grant, they used the application as a starting point to review the existing transit plan and identifying the sections that needed to be updated. They considered the idea of prioritizing the scope of work because of possible funding constraints.

b. Bicycle Plan Subcommittee

In response to an inquiry by *Chair Knox White*, *Staff Bergman* noted that the consultant contract was being finalized, and staff was working on preparing the document to be addressed by the consultant. A public meeting would be held in the near future.

Chair Knox White requested that the plan come before the Transportation Commission. *Staff Bergman* noted that a preliminary product could be brought before the Transportation Commission, and *Staff Khan* agreed that the policies issues should be brought before the Transportation Commission.

Chair Knox White noted that he had wanted such items to before the Transportation Commission, and inquired why this was not brought forth. *Staff Khan* noted that during the December 10, 2008, the City Attorney's office had recommended that not every item be brought forth as an action item, similar to the Planning Board's Consent Calendar.

Chair Knox White noted that he would like further clarification on this item. He believed the Estuary Crossing Funding Study should be discussed before being publicly reviewed, and he did not want to indicate support without seeing it. *Staff Khan* described the items in the study:

1. Fixing the Posey Tube Pathway (short term)
2. Intelligent Transportation Systems: increased throughput for transit through the Tubes;
3. Movable bridge near the Tubes, possibly near Pasta Pelican or Alameda Landing.

Chair Knox White inquired whether that included transit. *Staff Khan* replied that the agencies included AC Transit, but that did not appear viable at that location.

Commissioner Krueger inquired whether this could be tied in with the Jack London Square Streetcar study, or with high-speed rail. *Staff Khan* replied that the opposition was to the Broadway connection, not to transit itself.

Chair Knox White would like to see a working group formed between the Transportation Commission and the Planning Board to address the draft policies.

c. Pedestrian Plan

Staff Khan noted that the plan was adopted by the City Council, and that the design guidelines are currently under review by staff. He noted that staff has been occupied filling out paperwork for the Stimulus Package, and believed that Alameda County would receive \$40 million from the federal government. He described some of the items on the list included in the federal package. *Chair Knox White* hoped that the City would look at adding bus shelters to the grant packages.

Commissioner Schatmeier arrived.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

6A. Preliminary Proposed Thresholds of Significance and Implementation Policies

Staff Khan presented the staff report, and explained the meaning of the thresholds of significance.

Staff Khan detailed the background of this item, and the ideas developed by staff. He noted that Dowling Associates, the transportation consultants, developed LOS standards that would be discussed. LOS D was the level proposed to be established for all transportation modes. He discussed the methodologies employed, which was based on previous input from the TC. He described the methods by which conflicts would be resolved for street segments on which the Transportation Element has identified multiple modal priorities.

Based on the City's transit-first policy, staff recommends that transit generally be given preference, followed by the pedestrian mode, followed by the bicycle mode.

Staff Khan noted that LOS below D would always be a significant impact on street segments where only a single modal priority was identified. Where multiple modal priorities were identified, lower LOS would be acceptable to resolve conflicts as indicated in the staff report. He noted that at intersections, automobiles could go to LOS F if an arterial LOS D could be maintained. This level of flexibility was not permitted for any other mode.

A discussion of the selection of LOS D ensued.

Staff Khan noted that public input and discussion would be very important.

Commissioner Moehring complimented staff on a job well done with such a large task, and that she was pleased that this was not written in stone. With respect to Table 1, she inquired why LOS E for bikes, schools and recreational areas was acceptable for regional arterials, and why a higher level of service was not required. She was very concerned about safety issues regarding the most vulnerable modes: bicycle and pedestrian. *Staff Khan* replied that it was only triggered by conflicts, due to the identification of multiple priorities. He emphasized that in other circumstances, the City did not want to degrade any of the modes below LOS D. He noted that a hierarchy must be identified.

Commissioner Moehring inquired about bicycle detection at traffic signals.

Staff Bergman noted that they were installed at Sherman and Buena Vista. *Staff Khan* added that the City was working on that item.

Staff Bergman noted that in some locations, there were bike stencils on the ground that indicate where the bike should be lined up to trigger the signal. He noted that there were other areas in town where the capability was enabled, but that there were no stencils painted yet. He noted that the bicycle LOS only addressed bicycling conditions in a shared traffic environment; it did not apply to trails, which was LOS A all the time.

Commissioner Lee requested a clarification of LOS D. *Staff Khan* replied that the pedestrian LOS for each leg of an intersection would not experience a delay greater than an average of 40 seconds. He noted that for autos, each leg was not taken into consideration, and that the entire intersection was considered to determine the LOS.

Chair Knox White noted that past EIRs, including the TMP, included staff reports stating that they were as conservative as possible. He believed that the traffic study for the new theater confirmed that.

Staff Khan noted that each analysis was different, and that the theater assumed increasing traffic using a certain percentage of growth. Currently, the TMP model will be used for all the projects in the City, and that actual land use for each area will be used, providing much better information.

Open Public Comment

Jon Spangler believed this effort was a wonderful step beyond what had been in the 1991 General Plan. He inquired whether the transit LOS would be degraded if something happened to the Tube, such as more concrete falling in, closing the Tube. He inquired whether the number of wheelchair passengers on the Line 51 bus would create a further delay. He noted that bike/pedestrian conflicts on paths need to be addressed, and that a solution should be identified. He believed that there should be more emphasis on school and bike/pedestrian priority, as mentioned by *Commissioner Moehring*. He believed the bicycle LOS was somewhat fuzzy. He would like to know what intersections were being considered where there could potentially be conflict between transit queue jump lanes with a Class II bike lane. He believed the City was exploring new territory with this item, and looked forward to further refinement.

Ricardo Pedevilla noted that he usually got around town by biking, walking or taking public transit. He requested documentation for the Florida Department of Transportation methodology with respect to the bicycle LOS calculations. He inquired why that method was selected.

Staff Khan replied that the method was selected from different sources brought before the Transportation Commission in 2007, including the Highway Capacity Manual, blending the recommended methods into this report. He noted that many methods were very complicated and required substantial amounts of data collection. He noted that one consideration in selecting this method, in addition to its wide use around the country, was that it is easy to calculate, resulting in good data.

Nathan Landau, AC Transit, noted that he was sorry that he could not bring an official AC Transit answer or position at this meeting, and that he appreciated the work done by the staff, consultants and Transportation Commission. He believed that there was only one other City in the district that was close to this step. He noted that a bus traveling at approximately 12 mph, it would travel through that segment in 150- to 225 seconds. He noted that slowing the buses down would be more of an issue when they already moved slowly. He added that buses were mainly impacted by autos and occasionally bikes; in general they prefer to keep transit and bicycles on separate routes.

Close public comment

Commissioner McFarland left the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Chair Knox White identified the two main issues for discussion as resolution of conflicts between modes and the values selected for the thresholds. He noted that the discussion of prioritization would use LOS D as the starting point. He noted that the TMP was just adopted the previous week, and that it has several core policies and principles. He noted that Policy 4.4.2.E stated that “mitigations will not significantly degrade the levels of service for bikes, pedestrians and transit.”

Commissioner Moehring reiterated that while public transit should take a huge priority, she believed the safety issues of the more vulnerable users, especially bikes and pedestrians, should be considered.

Commissioner Krueger was surprised to see that pedestrians were rarely, if ever, the number one priority. He believed that everybody in the City was a pedestrian at one time or another.

Commissioner Lee noted that the school pedestrians were especially vulnerable, and that she was also concerned with the bicyclists.

Commissioner Krueger noted that the transit-first policy was referenced, and whether that was with respect to vehicular traffic, not over pedestrians.

Staff Khan noted that the feedback from the public regarding the Pedestrian Plan identified the primary issue as intersections and crossings. He noted that along segments, pedestrians were generally on the sidewalk, and did not interact directly with traffic.

Commissioner Schatmeier believed the pedestrians should have a high priority, and added that there were many more conflicts between pedestrians and autos than with the buses. He added that the Line 51 bus only went by every 10 minutes.

Staff Khan noted that delays for pedestrians at intersections could occur with the addition of a queue jump lane. He noted that research has shown that when the delays increase, there is also an increase in in appropriate crossings.

Chair Knox White noted that he was not convinced that putting in a queue jump lane would have an assured negative impact on the pedestrians as defined by the pedestrian plan. He believed there were places where the limited capacity leaving the Island made it necessary to identify the most efficient means to do so. He believed that corridors should be identified where transit should be allowed to trump pedestrians. He noted that there were very few roads with bike and transit priority. He believed that Clement, Tilden, Santa Clara, and certain parts of Central were the streets in which that conflict might exist. He believed that there were too many exceptions using the method proposed by staff, and that bicyclists on a bike street should receive priority. He had difficulty with the table, which was a visual representation of the policies, and that the Transportation Commission did not have the policies at this time. He expressed concern about the impact if a crosswalk or sidewalk were to be removed.

Staff Khan replied that he intended to include that issue in the report, and added that a crosswalk removal was being performed on Poggi Street, where a school used to be located. He noted that the yellow midblock crosswalk at this location no longer had any function, need or use, therefore it was being removed. He noted that a policy identifying removal of a crosswalk as a significant environmental impact could potentially trigger the need to prepare an environmental document.

Commissioner Moehring noted that Webster Street was a traffic hub, particularly at the corner near Santa Clara; many buses, pedestrians and transportation used that street in the commercial district. She would like to separate that item from the schools and recreation because the transportation in a commercial district was extremely important; pedestrians were an integral part of that equation.

Chair Knox White did not like the idea of treating Class II and Class III bike routes differently, and that he understood that they had a different hierarchy. He noted that the only reason Oak Street was a Class III route was because it had not yet been made a Class II route; he believed it was a key cross-island roadway and that it should not be allowed to get worse.

Staff Khan recapped the comments that he heard:

1. The Transportation Commission would like to see safety issues to be examined, and for bike and pedestrian safety to be considered a priority;
2. Pedestrians and bikes should be given preference in school and recreation zones; and
3. Transit in the commercial zones should be prioritized.

Chair Knox White noted that pedestrians should be prioritized throughout the city, with the exception of gateways and commercial zones, where transit would be prioritized.

Commissioner Krueger noted that the whole point of building an exclusive lane was to give transit priority.

Staff Khan added that the transit should be given preference where it had the exclusive right of way.

Commissioner Krueger agreed with that assessment, and liked that gateway suggestion because it addressed the queue jump issue. He believed that queue jumps could be included as part of the transit exclusive right-of-way corridors.

Staff Khan noted that crosswalk removal issues had been addressed, as was sidewalk removal. However, he stated that staff supports giving higher priority to maintaining LOS on Class II bicycle lanes than on Class III bicycle routes.

Chair Knox White noted that believed this would lend itself to a developer or staff to push for Class III, because the Class II mitigation to a higher threshold would not be needed.

Staff Khan noted that the Commission's concern was the throughput of moving people through gateways. He noted that they were very short segments through the bridges and the tubes. He noted that in order to take people out of single-occupant vehicles, and if they were going to San Francisco, he believed that transit throughput should be provided to accomplish that. He stated that it would be critical to maintain the safety of intersections and crossings, because that was where they interacted with automobiles and other modes. He suggested that staff be given a chance to re-examine this issue and return to the Transportation Commission.

Chair Knox White suggested that on exclusive and primary transit streets; transit should be prioritized.

Commissioner Krueger noted that the Transportation Commission did not discuss automobiles, and inquired why they were being put on the bottom.

Chair Knox White believed that the TMP already did that, where there was a conflict. He believed there was consensus on the comments regarding the resolution of conflicts, and wished to address the thresholds. He suggested that instead of identifying a specific number, an impact could be defined as any time the LOS degraded from C to D, or D to E, instead of assigning a bottom. He noted that any degradation or significant movement would be identified as an impact.

Commissioner Krueger suggested that a hybrid system may be used to identify the floor and the delta, or change. He was not in favor of making it so sensitive that an EIR would be required for minor occurrences.

Staff Khan noted that staff had no intention of moving in that direction. He noted that most of the streets in Alameda would function very well for bikes, pedestrians, transit and automobiles. Staff was concerned about the issue of degrading the impact on automobiles so much that it could create secondary impacts for other modes.

Chair Knox White found the staff recommendation of LOS D for all modes to be perplexing. He did not believe it was equitable, and that one intersection in Alameda operated at D; no intersections were below 40 seconds. *Staff Khan* noted that Webster and Atlantic also failed at that time. *Chair Knox White* noted that came from Dowling's documentation, and he did not know how the City Council, boards and commissions could consider themselves good stewards of the community by not finding any impacts to the pedestrian environment until it became

worse than the conditions in front of the College of Alameda. He noted that Otis and Park was also a difficult intersection for pedestrians, even though it was an LOS C. He noted that Encinal and Park, which was a busy intersection and was not a good place to park, which was an LOS B. He believed that the City should step away from LOS D. He understood where the transit numbers came from, and suggested that a percent change along a segment would be more meaningful. He believed it would be difficult to come up with a specific number, and that change in the current level of service would be more meaningful in keeping the transit schedule.

Commissioner Schatmeier requested further clarification on how a level of service could be assigned to transit, and noted that length of the corridors were an issue. He did not know what the baseline was, and noted that a bus could travel through Alameda at midnight than during the peak hour because there were not as many passengers, and not as many cars on the streets.

Staff Khan noted that staff would examine peak period conditions, and noted that any ADA delay of the bus was not part of the discussion; that discussion meant travel time, and subtracting dwell time from the transit travel time. If a project increased the travel time with more cars, and if LOS was already E or F, staff would examine what else could be considered.

Commissioner Krueger believed the length of the corridor had to be considered, and that the automobile arterial segments discussed the average travel speed, which must take the length of the corridor into account. He believed that should be taken into account for transit as well, and that the effect on the travel speed should be considered.

Staff Khan stated that was correct, and that staff was looking at segments of approximately one-half to three-quarters of a mile.

Staff Khan noted that when staff examined it, they had not run the arterial analysis at that point. He noted that it looked at signalized intersections, and that they inquired whether the model could be run on a street without signals. He noted that they may want to resort to the intersection, and that they were discussing the issue with Dowling.

Commissioner Schatmeier inquired why the City would be tolerant of degradation of the LOS for automobiles, and believed there were impacts that should be described and responded to.

Chair Knox White agreed with *Commissioner Schatmeier's* comment, and noted that he would like to identify the impacts.

Staff Khan noted that the Commission would like to examine:

1. Degradation for pedestrians, bikes and transit by a letter grade; look into how the thresholds were set, particularly D versus C, as well as for pedestrians and bikes;
2. The baseline for transit LOS D should be defined and addressed;
3. Travel speed is a better measure for transit than delay;
4. The intersection LOS should be evaluated for automobiles; and
5. Why the degradation of the automobile LOS should be allowed to degrade.

Chair Knox White noted that LOS D was standard for automobiles, and inquired whether the pedestrian, bike and transit threshold should be defended. He noted that the ability to define the threshold should be based on what was happening in the City.

No action was taken.

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

a. Estuary Crossing Feasibility Study

Chair Knox White noted that during the Estuary Crossing study discussion, AC Transit stated they were not interested in a transit-only crossing across the Estuary. He requested clarification from staff.

Staff Khan replied that in context with the delays caused by raising and lowering the bridge, and in context with crossing train tracks in Oakland, those two issues could seriously impact headways.

Nathan Landau of AC Transit noted that was consistent with what he understood, and what made sense regarding the existing problems. He noted that a drawbridge over the Estuary could be open for as much as 30 minutes, which would ruin the effect of any transit. He noted that it had been an ongoing issue at the Embarcadero with the main line buses getting stuck. He noted there was considerable Tube congestion, and that they desperately needed queue jumps to get in there.

In response to an inquiry by *Chair Knox White* whether he was aware of any proposed grade separations for the railroad tracks at Jack London Square, *Mr. Landau* replied that there were none in a serious way. He noted that it had come up regularly, and that it would be a very expensive project.

b. Broadway-Jackson Update

Staff Khan noted that Caltrans stated that comments could be expected on the PSR by mid-March. He noted that funding must be obligated in 90 days, and that it would be brought down to 60 days due to the stimulus funding.

c. Line 63 update

Staff Khan noted that staff prepared an off-agenda report for City Council, and distributed copies to the Transportation Commissioners.

Staff Bergman noted that AC Transit was still performing further analysis, particularly the possibility of interlining with another line to be more efficient. He added that the possibility of relocating the terminus on that end to bring it closer to the 12th Street BART station. The possibility of shifting to Lake Merritt was considered and discarded, as most of the Line 63 riders did not appear to be transferring to BART, but traveling to other destinations in Oakland.

d. Casual Carpool/Park and Ride Analysis

Staff Bergman noted that there was discussion about designating a casual carpool area to facilitate pickups without drivers getting tickets. Staff observed and surveyed the major existing casual carpool site at Encinal and Park Avenue; 97 survey responses were collected in about an hour. He noted that there were a lot of users, and that 75 of the respondents used the casual carpool at least four days a week. 55% of the respondents walked to the casual carpool site, and 40% indicated that they drove to the site. Staff was looking at designated areas to facilitate boarding and were working with AC Transit to ensure it coordinated with the location of OX bus stops.

e. Upcoming development-related traffic studies and plans

Staff Khan noted that the Boatworks EIR was moving forward, near Blanding and Oak Street; there was a proposal for 42 housing units. Staff would bring more information when it became available. He noted that the Planning Board held a public hearing on that project in its most recent meeting.

f. Future meeting agenda items

Staff Khan noted that Line 51 would be discussed at the February TC meeting.

Staff Khan noted that the Water Emergency Transit Authority wished to hold a public hearing in March, immediately preceding the Transportation Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m. He added that the threshold significance issue would return to the Transportation Commission.

ADJOURNMENT: 10:30 p.m.

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